

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 05497 140223Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----009864 150130Z /70
R 122204Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1595

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 5497

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BL
SUBJECT: BOLIVIAN NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT PRESIDENT
SOUNDS US OUT ON HIS POSSIBLE RESIGNATION

REF: LA PAZ 5180

1. WHEN I LAST SAW ELECTORAL COURT PRESIDENT MANTILLA PRIOR TO ELECTIONS, WE AGREED THAT ANY CONTACT BETWEEN US DURING THE VOTE TABULATION PROCESS WOULD BE UNWISE, BUT MANTILLA WAS VERY ANXIOUS TO HAVE MY ASSURANCES OF US SUPPORT. HE IS NOW THE MOST MISERABLE MAN IN BOLIVIA, SITTING ON A NUMBER OF BALLOTS HE FEELS ARE FRAUDULENT, AND DRIBBING OUT A SLOW COUNT OF MORE OR LESS STRAIGHT VOTES, WHILE POLITICAL TENSIONS MOUNT ALL AROUND. IF HE LETS GO A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF TAINTED BALLOTS, GENERAL JUAN PEREDA COULD BECOME PRESIDENT WITH 50 PLUS PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE, CREATING A CRIPPLED REGIME THAT WOULD BE GENERALLY CONSIDERED THE RESULT OF FRAUD. SUCH A REGIME COULDD WELL BE DRIVEN TO APPLY MORE AND MORE REPRESSION TO MAINTAIN ITSELF, UNDOING THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS BOLIVIA HAS ACHIEVED IN THE PAST YEAR. IF MANTILLA THROWS OUT ALL OF THE FRAUDULENT BALLOT BOXES HE CAN DETECT (WHICH COULD COST PEREDA IN PARTICULAR SOME STRAIGHT VOTES AS WELL), THE ELECTION WOULD PROBABLY
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BE PUT INTO THH CONGRESS, WHICH ALL BOLIVIANS HAVE
CONDITIONED THEMSELVES TO EQUATE WITH GOVERNMENT.

2. TODAY MANTILLA, VIA THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR, FLOATED WITH ME THE THOUGHT THAT HE IS CONSIDERING RESIGNATION. I SENT BACK VIA THE SAME CHANNEL MY PERSONAL VIEW THAT MANTILLA'S RESIGNATION WOULD BE A MISTAKE. HIS

RESIGNATION WOULD WELL FORCE AN AGGRIEVED MILITARY TO
DECLARE DEMOCRATIZATION A FAILURE AND INSTALL A MILITARY
GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD BE FORCED TO TAKE REPRESSIVE
ACTION (EXILES AGAIN, SUPPRESSION OF LABOR UNIONS,
POLITICAL ARRESTS, ETC). THE OPINION I PASSED TO
MANTILLA WAS THAT THE BEST FINISH OF A BAD HAND WOULD BE
FOR HIM TO ANNUL EVERY POLLING PLACE RESULT ABOUT WHICH HE
AND HIS COURT HAD DOUBTS AND TO LET THE RESULT FALL
WHERE IT MAY ON THE BASIS OF THE UNTAINTED VOTES--
RECOGNIZING THAT THIS COULD WELL MEAN PUTTING THE
ELECTION IN THE CONGRESS. THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR
ON HIS OWN PASSED THE SAME JUDGMENT TO MANTILLA. I ASKED
THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO REITERATE THAT THIS FRIENDLY
GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING TO HIM TO DO HIS CONSTITUTIONAL
JOB AND WILL BACK HIM IF HE DOES IN ANY REASONABLE WAY
WE CAN.
BOEKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, COURTS, ELECTION FRAUD
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LAPAZ05497
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780290-0086
Format: TEL
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780770/aaaacgsm.tel
Line Count: 79
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e3684977-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 LA PAZ 5180
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2040459
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOLIVIAN NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT PRESIDENT SOUNDS US OUT ON HIS POSSIBLE RESIGNATION
TAGS: PINT, BL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e3684977-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014